Burden on income tax payers

*15. SHRI P.K. MAHESHWARI: Will the Minister of FINANCE be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government are aware that only 2 per cent of the country's population is income tax assessee who pay income tax for the 98 per cent of non-tax paying population;

(b) if so, whether more burden by imposing 2 per cent surcharge on the existing income tax payers is justified;

(c) if not, whether this will encourage people to shy away from becoming honest tax payers; and

(d) if so, the action taken by Government in this regard?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF FINANCE (SHRI GINGEE N. RAMACHANDRAN): (a) The total number of income tax assessees as on 31st January, 2002 is 2.82 crores which works out to slightly more than 2 per cent of the country's population.

(b) The surcharge of 2 per cent was levied by the Union Government through Finance Act, 2001 for providing relief and rehabilitation to the quake-hit areas of Gujarat. In view of the unprecedented disaster and in view of the fact that surcharge can be levied only on the existing tax payers, the surcharge cannot be said to be unjustified.

(c) and (d) Do not arise in view of (b) above.

World heritage sites

*16. SHRI RAJNATH SINGH 'SURYA': Will the Minister of TOURISM AND CULTURE be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that Government have failed to get any of its sites declared as World Heritage Site this year also;

(b) if so, whether it was due to delay in submitting the request to UNESCO;

(c) if so, whether any responsibility for this lapse has been fixed;